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ABC BRIEFING

14 June 1955

SOVIET AVIATION "SHOW-OFF" PLANS

I. In past three weeks, USSR has apparently adopted surprising new policy of actively seeking international publicity for its achievements in aircraft design.

A. Soviet spectators at Toronto International Trade Fair publicly characterized US air display as "obsolete" (which in fact much of it was) and suggested that world watch for "something new" at Moscow Aviation Day fly-by this weekend.

B. Soviet Legation in Switzerland has indicated USSR's interest in exhibiting military planes at Geneva International Air Show (24 June-17 July).

C. USSR may also participate in Canada's International Air Show next year.

D. Finally, USSR has - for second consecutive year - pushed schedule of Moscow's Aviation Day show-off (normally July) up to late June (19th).

II. Comments at Toronto Trade Fair are attributed by press to team of Soviet engineers, who showed particular interest in Martin Batador (pilotless bomber) and in engine exhibits.

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- A. Engineers stated that Aviation Day display will include "models more advanced than those seen before" and will "make US airpower look obsolete".
- B. Suggested Canadian hosts visit Moscow to "compare what you see here with what we will show."

III. In Switzerland, following up earlier statements by Soviet officials that USSR might send MIG jet fighters to Geneva show (where UK, France and others will display late military types), Legation spokesmen said USSR "seriously considering" participation.

- A. Asked details of plans of other nations, particularly US.
- B. Questioned suitability of Geneva airport for operating Soviet bomber types and stated that, if unable to land, bombers might in any case over-fly show.

IV. Possibility of USSR exhibition at Canadian Show (June, '56) first broached in late May, when Soviet Ambassador made bid for such participation.

- A. Press states that engineers at Toronto Fair confirmed this Soviet intent.

V. Meanwhile, rehearsals for unusually early

Aviation Day fly-by in Moscow have displayed lesser

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numbers of same jet bombers (four-jet BISONs and twin-jet BADGERS) which overflow city in rehearsals for abortive May Day parade.

A. Not seen, so far, is turbo-prop bomber (BEAR), of which at least nine were seen during May Day rehearsals.

B. Also apparently scheduled for "official" Aviation Day display are the new day fighters (FARMER) and all-weather interceptors (FLASHLIGHT) likewise seen during May Day rehearsals.

C. Only "new" craft seen rehearsing to date is a large helicopter.

1. Seems unlikely that blow-hard engineers at Toronto would have had something this "tame" in mind.

2. Has been Soviet practice in past to include prototypes in this show, so may be surprise in store.

VI. Following considerations could underlie apparent Kremlin switch to active hunt for publicity on air developments.

A. Present Soviet progress places USSR on at least equal footing with US in development modern fighters, bombers.

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B. "Show-off" in Moscow, properly touted abroad, serves to underscore this progress.

C. "Show-off" abroad (if either Geneva or Canada participation actually materializes) permits muscle-flexing before audience particularly sensitive to threat of nuclear war.

D. At same time, such "show-off" can be propagandized by USSR as exact opposite - - a sort of "curtain-lifting" gesture towards international amity, cooperation.